

Comments of Edward (Ted) Ames

On HP0549, LD800

**AN ACT TO PREVENT PASSAGE OF ALEWIVES THROUGH GRAND FALLS DAM
ON THE ST. CROIX RIVER**

Thank you Honorable Chairmen and members of the Marine Resources Committee for the opportunity to share my concerns about LD800.

I am opposed to LD800, because it proposes to deliberately deny alewives, a depleted, native species, access to nearly all its historical spawning grounds, with the expressed intent to cause their further depletion. The Bill assumes this would somehow protect small mouth bass, an exotic species introduced in Maine during the late 1800s that not only is abundant, but coexists throughout the State with sea-run alewives with no difficulties at all. Attempting to eliminate alewives from their natal watersheds to enhance small mouth bass numbers, a non-native species, is not based on fact or science, but on opinion.

LD800 ignores volumes of scientific studies and facts that clearly show alewives and other diadromous species do no harm to small mouth bass, but are a critical prey species for all predators throughout the St. Croix River watershed and actually enhance small mouth bass populations. Their numbers also simultaneously protect Atlantic salmon smolts emigrating from the River each spring by providing predators with the arrival of an abundance of alternative prey.

LD800 provides little or no ecological or economic benefit to Maine citizens; instead, it would eliminate a key prey species and the possibility for establishing an estimated million dollar river herring fishery for the St. Croix. Alewives are an increasingly important source of spring bait for Maine's lobster and halibut fisheries. Politically, LD800 is equally damaging. It would break a centuries-old treaty with the Passamaquoddy tribe; violate international agreements with Canada and New Brunswick, break regulations of the Environmental Protection Agency and potentially invite an endangered species listing and legal challenges by NOAA-National Marine Fisheries Service and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Recent scientific studies indicate the consequences of LD800's proposed elimination of alewife runs in the St. Croix would not be limited to economic and environmental losses occurring in fresh water. NOAA/NMFS has identified that alewives are an important prey species for restoring Atlantic salmon. The agency has invested millions of dollars to restore their runs in Maine rivers. Related studies also link alewives to the current disappearance of coastal spawning groups of cod, haddock and other marine species near Passamaquoddy Bay and suggest that alewives may be critical for restoring the Maine's coastal groundfish fisheries.

In sum, LD800 has no supporting scientific or economic information that shows alewives have any effect on small mouth bass, other than possibly providing them with more prey. The legislation threatens to undo a national effort to restore Atlantic salmon, inhibit the recovery of

cod, haddock and other groundfish stocks in eastern Maine; it eliminates a possible million dollar alewife fishery from the St. Croix and degrades other locally important commercial and recreational fisheries for species that prey on alewives. In addition to the ecological and economic damage LD800 offers eastern Maine, it also proposes to violate the treaty rights of the Passamaquoddy tribe, violate federal regulations from the EPA, NOAA, and disregards a ruling of the IJC.

With no supporting scientific or economic information to justify LD800, it seems counterproductive for the State of Maine to needlessly damage the ecological health, rich diversity and enormous economic potential of the St. Croix watershed by destroying native species such as alewives and other native diadromous fish.

I urge you to kill LD800.

Respectively submitted,

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